

HEALTH ALERT FOR FAMILIES!

WHOOPIING COUGH (PERTUSSIS)

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services has asked all school districts in the state, to notify families that the reported cases of pertussis (whooping cough) continue to increase in Wisconsin among children of all ages.

Pertussis is a bacterial disease that is spread through the air by direct face to face contact with a person who has pertussis.

To help prevent further spread of the disease, it is important that you **not** send your child to school if he or she has any of the signs or symptoms of pertussis as follows: Pertussis begins with cold like symptoms and a cough that becomes much worse over a period of 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits") followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. There is generally no fever. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching their breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough.

Children suspected of having pertussis will be sent home from school. Children with suspected pertussis should be tested, treated with appropriate antibiotics and isolated until at least 5 days of antibiotic treatment have been completed. All suspect and confirmed cases of pertussis will be immediately reported to your local health department. We understand that keeping children home from school is not always easy, but this is the most effective way to help stop the spread of the disease.

The vaccine used to prevent pertussis, DTaP, is only licensed for children ages 2 months through 6 years. Pertussis is most serious in infants and preschoolers who are not up to date on their DTaP vaccine. If you have preschool children at home and they need vaccine, arrange to get them immunized as soon as possible. There currently is no pertussis vaccine licensed for persons 7 years of age and older.

Please contact the local public health department that serves your area if you have questions. (http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/dph_ops/localhealth)

Thank you for your cooperation